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Statement by Interim Chief Steve Bell to City Council

Posted On Wednesday February 16, 2022

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 5:28pm

(Ottawa)--Mayor and Members of Council,

We are here today to provide you a briefing on the plan of action that has already begun to end this unlawful protest in our City.

We are also here to answer questions from members of Council.

This morning, the command of the OPP, RCMP and Ottawa Police were briefed on the significant steps being taken to bring a safe end to this crisis.

The Ottawa Police remains the police of jurisdiction and lead of this integrated command.

This is the city we are sworn to protect. It's our responsibility and our job to safely remove this unlawful protest. The RCMP and OPP are here to support us and I thank them for the significant efforts and resources they are bringing forward.

We have a methodical and well-resourced plan with a simple mission:

We are going to take back the entirety of the downtown core and every occupied space. We are going to remove this unlawful protest. We will return our city to a state of normalcy.

Over the last few days we have developed strategies to deal with all possible scenarios.

We will be focused on public safety, demonstrator safety and officer safety. All of our plans and actions will be lawful and in line with the Charter.

Demonstrators must leave the unlawful protest site. Officers are already going truck to truck to advise them of this demand.

We want them to do this peacefully and immediately and we are facilitating the departure of anyone who wants to leave.

We also have appropriate and lawful methods to remove anyone who refuses.

We are also aware there are children in the area. This concerns us a great deal.

We have engaged a planning team and the Children's Aid Society to encourage anyone with children in the area to leave and bring those children to a place of safety.

We also have a plan to ensure children are protected and cared for during any action.

You will be hearing and seeing these actions in the coming days.

It will take time to do this right. Every step will be considered and methodical. I ask for your patience and confidence.

Some of the techniques we are lawfully able and prepared to use are not what we are used to seeing in Ottawa. But we are prepared to use them where necessary to bring about the safest outcome and restore order.

I am confident that we now have the resources, the plan, and the commitment to get the job done.

The plan will not be considered complete until such a time that the streets are cleared fully.

We have commitment from our partners that resources will remain in place until this objective is achieved.

We know that this has left our residents feeling unsafe and abandoned and has tarnished our own reputation and that of our City. We deeply regret this.

There are many questions being asked about how we got here. We all know that there will be full review and we all welcome it so we can learn from the events of the last three weeks.

But for today and the days to come the Ottawa Police Service and our partners are focused on getting this job done.

Wherever those questions take us, I want you to know that the members of the Ottawa Police Service care about this city. They are committed to these actions and they are ready to go.

I am proud of them for all they have done and all that we will be doing in the days to come.

Thank you.

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